

# Saint David's Day Dinner

March 1, 2009

Carbondale, PA 18407



News, 2/25/09

## St. David's Day marked with annual dinner, book, Welsh concert

✓ The sixth annual Saint David's Day Dinner hosted by the Carbondale Historical Society will take place on Sunday, March 1., in the Avanti Room of the Ben-Mar Restaurant on North Main Street, Carbondale, at 6 p.m. with a traditional Welsh dinner. It will be followed by a concert by the Saint David's Welsh Male Chorus of Scranton. Tickets are \$20; call Joseph Pascoe at 570-282-4234.St.

During the 100 years in which coal-mining dominated northeastern Pennsylvania, the feast day of St. David, the patron saint of Wales, once made the waning days of winter as lively in Carbondale and the upper Lackawanna Valley as the celebration of the better-known feast of St. Patrick later in the month.

"Carbondale was heavily Welsh," says Robert Powell, executive director of the Carbondale Historical Society, "and beginning in the 1830s there were several Welsh churches, though they have since merged with other congregations."

This year the historical society will sponsor its sixth annual St. David's Day observance with a banquet at the Ben-Mar restaurant and the St. David's Male Chorus singing resoundingly in the old Welsh language.

"Beginning in the 1830s as the railroads and coal mines began to develop, between 50,000 and 60,000 Welshmen and their families came to America," says Robert Phillip Bomboy, the author of the new novel, "Smart Boys Swimming in the River Styx," which has three Welshmen among its

central characters. "Industrialization produced craftsmen in Wales and the British Isles a half century before heavy industries began to grow here," the author explains, "and the new railroads and coal mines brought the Welsh and their skills to Pennsylvania."

The novel tells the story of a National Guard unit in a terrible train wreck on September 11, 1950. Soldiers of Carbondale's 109th Infantry were actually aboard but sustained lesser injuries in the wreck, because they were seated in cars farther forward when a speeding Pennsylvania Railroad locomotive rear-ended the troop train in Ohio. The more seriously injured and dead were members of a companion unit, Wilkes-Barre's 109th Field Artillery Battalion, in the train's last two cars.

Today, 1.2 million Americans (including the actor Tom Cruise) can find Welsh ancestors in their family trees, and most can trace them back to Pennsylvania. Bomboy's coal-mining ancestors came from Cardiganshire in Wales.

"I was married in a Welsh church," Bomboy adds. "My mother was Welsh, and three of the main characters in my novel are Welsh. Their family names are among the most common of Welsh surnames — Lewis and Jones. Lewis is distinctive here in northeastern Pennsylvania and Jones is the fourth most-common surname in America."

Celebrations of St. David's Day in Wales often took the form of literary and singing festivals. Such festivals, called Eisteddfods and Gymanfa Ganus, go far back there, but the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission says the first Eisteddfod transplanted to America was contested here in Carbondale on Christmas Day in 1850.

There are no longer any eisteddfods in Carbondale, but Dr. Powell points out that Welsh groups in the Lackawanna Valley get together to sing in Gymanfa

Ganus several times a year. There are many who believe that the Welsh sing the most beautifully of any people.

"Our family tradition says my great-grandfather sang in the Welsh chorus that defeated the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and won the top prize of \$5,000 at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893," Bomboy says. "It was a chorus of 300 male voices, and they literally made the rafters ring when they sang 'Cwn Rhondda.'"

Bomboy will discuss the Welsh influence in northeastern Pennsylvania at a reception for his novel on March 7, from 2 to 5 p.m., at the Barnes & Noble bookstore in the Arena Hub Plaza next to the Wyoming Valley Mall in Wilkes-Barre. The novel, now in its second edition, is being reprinted in Wales for distribution in the British Isles, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Carbondale  
News

2/9/2009



# **St. David's Day Dinner, Concert, and Historical Program**

**March 1, 2009**

**Hosted by the  
Carbondale Historical Society  
and Museum**

**St. David's Day Committee  
Barbara James Campbell, Joseph Pascoe,  
S. Robert Powell, and Eleanor Spellman**



**To be born Welsh is to be born privileged.  
Not with a silver spoon in your mouth, but  
with music in your blood and poetry in your soul.**

**Avanti Room, Ben-Mar Restaurant  
North Main Street, Carbondale, PA 18407**



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# **Program for the Evening**

## **Welcome**

**Dr. S. Robert Powell, Executive Director,  
Carbondale Historical Society and Museum**

## **Invocation**

**Rev. Dale Pepper, Pastor, Berean Baptist  
Church, Carbondale**

## **Dinner**

**Salad, Cream of Leek Soup, Roast Loin of Pork  
with Apple Stuffing, Mashed Potatoes, Glazed  
Carrots, Parfait Dessert, Welsh Cookies**

## **Concert**

**St. David's Welsh Male Chorus  
Mrs. Fran Justin, Director**

## **Historical Program**

**Remarks: Jerry Williams, President of the  
St. David's Society of Lackawanna County,  
2007-2009**

**Remarks: Ted Frutchey, Member of the Board of  
Directors of the St. David's Society of  
Lackawanna County**

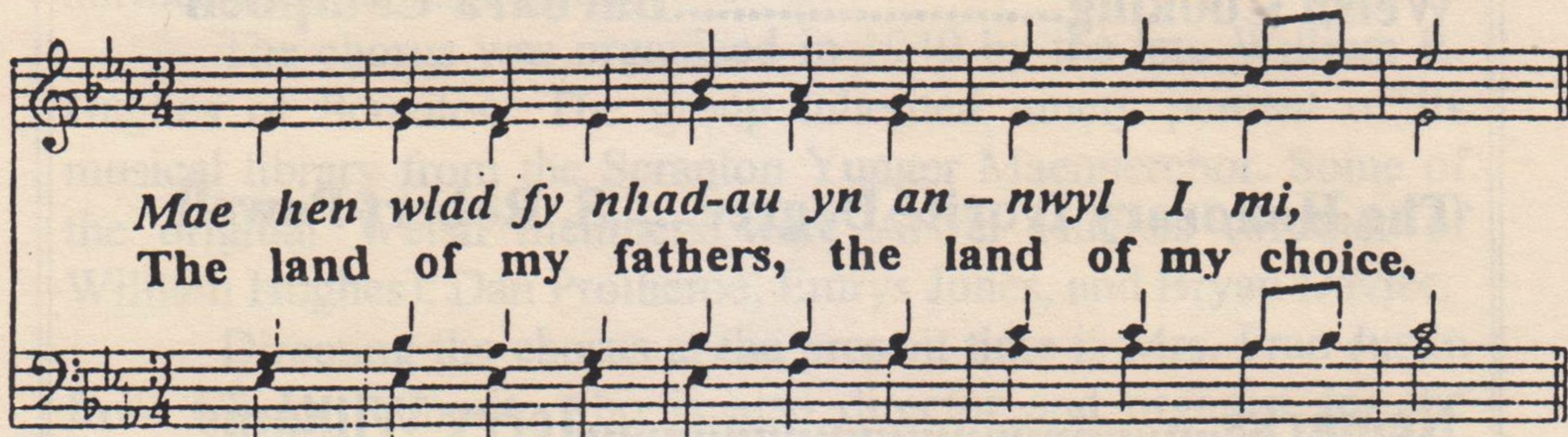
**Closing Remarks: Dr. S. Robert Powell**



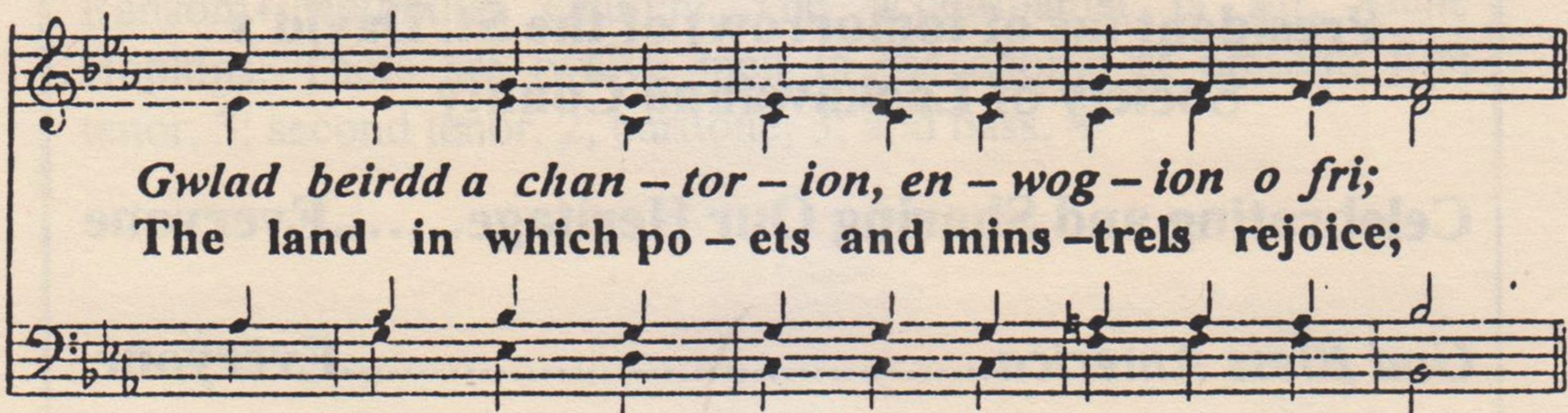
# Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau (Land of My Fathers)

Moderately, fervently

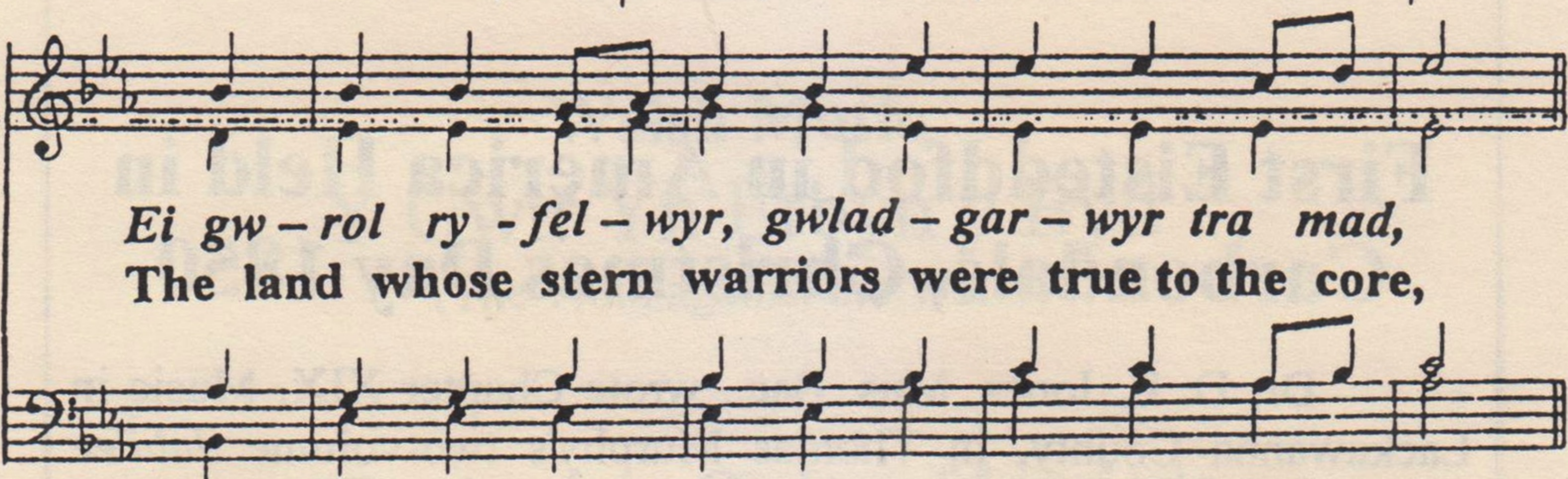
WELSH MELODY  
JAMES JAMES (IAGO AP IEUAN) (1833-1902)  
Arr. GWYNN WILLIAMS



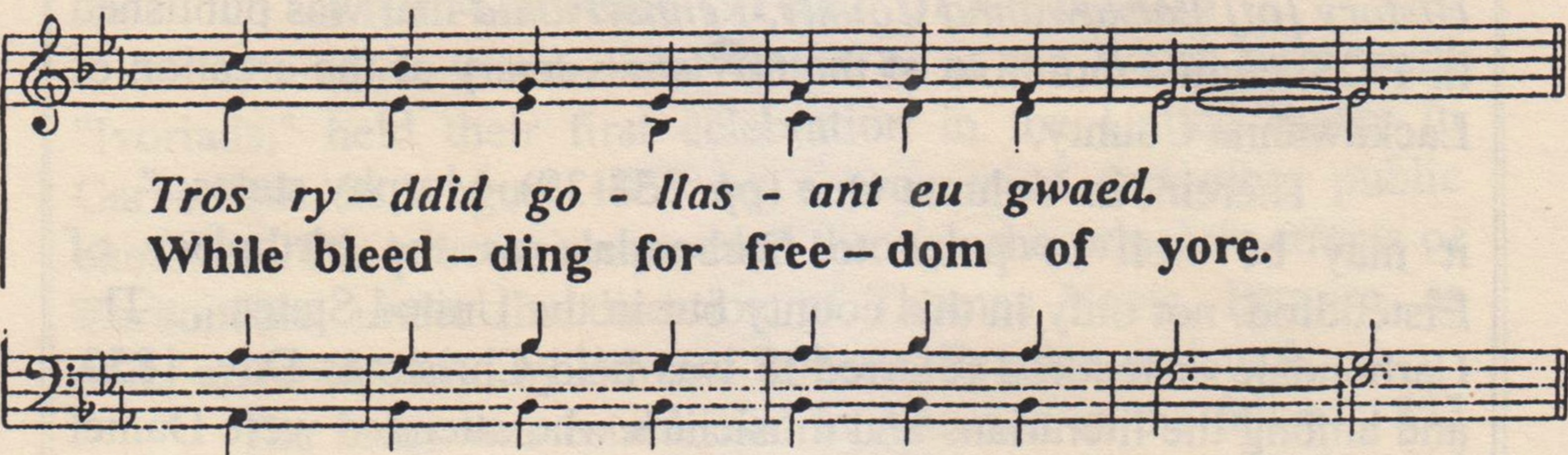
*Mae hen wlad fy nhad-au yn an-nwyl I mi,*  
The land of my fathers, the land of my choice,



*Gwlad beirdd a chan-tor-ion, en-wog-ion o fri;*  
The land in which po-ets and mins-trels rejoice;



*Ei gw-rol ry-fel-wyr, gwlad-gar-wyr tra mad,*  
The land whose stern warriors were true to the core,




*Tros ry-ddid go-llas-ant eu gwaed.*  
While bleed-ding for free-dom of yore.




CHORUS



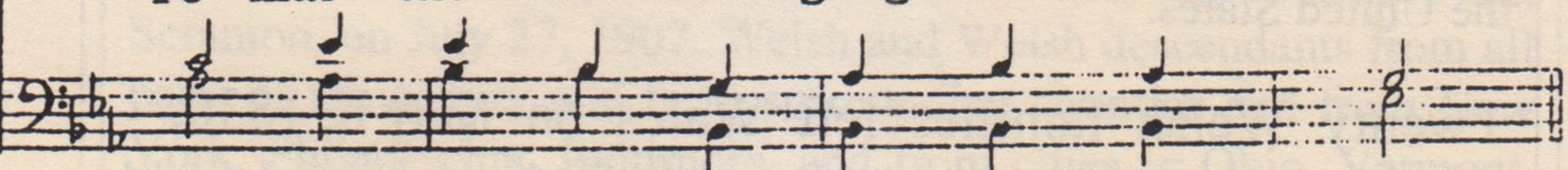
*Gwlad, Gwlad, pleid - iol wyf i'm gwlad.*  
*Wales! Wales! Fav' - rite land of Wales!*

*Tra mor yn fur i'r bur hoff*  
*While sea her wall, may naught befall*

*Bau, O by-dded i'r hen aith bar - hau.*  
*To mar the old lan - guage of Wales.*



*Welsh Words,*  
*Evan James (Ieuan ap Iago)*  
*(1809 - 1878)*

*English Words,*  
*Ebenezer Thomas (Eban Fardd)*  
*(1802 - 1863)*





